(c) if so, the decision taken in this regard; and

(d) the steps Government has taken to ensure that all the poor old persons of the country can avail the benefit of this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI CHANDRA SEKHAR SAHU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) A proposal is under consideration to provide pension to persons who are 60 years or higher and belonging to a household below the poverty line according to the criteria prescribed by the Government of India, by lowering the age limit from 65 years to 60 years under Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS).

(d) Guidelines have been issued to all the State Governments to identify the beneficiaries based on the liberalized eligibility criteria under IGNOAPS and certify that all the eligible beneficiaries have been covered. Information and Education Campaign has also been taken up to generate awareness.

Laggardness in implementing NREGS in some States

2612. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the latest data on employment provided under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme shows that States like Gujarat, Maharashtra considered economically and industrially advanced areas are among laggards;

(b) whether according to the figures till October, 2007, Maharashtra provided employment only 6 per cent of the households that has been registered and given job cards under the Employment Guarantee Scheme;

(c) the total States who have not been able to perform better on rural job scheme; and

(d) the main reasons therefor and what action Government proposes to take against those who have not implemented this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI CHANDRA SEKHAR SAHU): (a) National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is demand driven. A registered job card holding household under NREGA has a legal right to get 100 days of employment in a financial year for doing unskilled manual work on demand. This right can be exercised by a household any time during a financial year. Employment demand under NREGA is likely to be low in districts that are comparatively more developed, with greater opportunities of employment in other avenues both in agriculture and rural non-farm activities.

(b) NREGS being demand driven, the percentage of employment provided is measured with respect to employment demanded by the registered job card holders. In Maharashtra, as reported by the State Government, till October, 2007, 183086 households had demanded employment under NREGA and employment was provided to all of them.

(c) and (d) NREGS is demand driven. The pace of its implementation varies from State to State. However, all the States have been instructed to further improve their performance in implementing NREGS.